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AUTHOR Passow, A. Harry
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ABSTRACT

The terms "educationally disadvantaged" and "compensatory education" are defined in many ways. "Compensation" implies a deficit which must be overcome, but there is little agreement on where the deficiency is located--in the child, his family or home, his school, or all of these. In general, it is agreed that school districts with large concentrations of children from disadvantaged backgrounds have substantially lower academic achievement levels and higher dropout rates, but there is no consensus on the causes for these and other differentials in educational performance. Since the 1960's, a variety of Federal and State legislation has been enacted to provide compensatory programs and services, but these efforts have met with varied successes and failures. The 30,000 Title I projects, for example, reflected multiple goals and multiple treatments which are not easily converted into overarching objectives or successful program models. This multiplicity has complicated any effort to evaluate compensatory programs, but twenty years of compensatory programs have taught us that the immediate goal should be to raise the achievement levels of more disadvantaged students. A survey of literature which attempted to generalize about the lessons of compensatory education makes it possible to justify increased expenditures in the following areas: (1) early childhood programs; (2) staff development and in-service education; (3) pull-out vis-a-vis regular class instruction; (4) appropriate instructional materials and resources; (5) provisions for children with limited English; (6) programs for disadvantaged high school students; (7) programs for the disadvantaged gifted; (8) parent participation programs; and (9) recruiting and retaining of teachers. (KH)

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EDUCATING THE DISADVANTAGED--THE TASK SCHOOL DISTRICTS FACE

A Statement Prepared by A. Harry Passow
Jacob H. Schiff Professor of Education
at Teachers College, Columbia University

As Levin (1985) has pointed out:

> All student populations include substantial individual variations in educational performance. However, by virtue of the accident of birth, some groups of students are likely to experience only the most limited educational progress in the present school system. Persons from non-white, Hispanic and immigrant families, and from households where parents have low income and little education, tend to complete fewer years of schooling, are more likely to drop out of high school and show lower test scores in virtually all academic subjects than their more advantaged peers. These are the educationally disadvantaged. (p. 3)

At an international conference held at the UNESCO Institute for Education in Hamburg, West Germany, a distinction was made between the terms disadvantaged and deprived (Passow, 1970):

> Disadvantaged-- A child is at a disadvantage if, because of social or cultural characteristics (e.g., social class, race, ethnic origin, poverty, sex, geographical location, etc.), he comes into the school system with knowledge, skills, and attitudes which impede learning and contribute to a cumulative academic deficit. The disadvantage may persist throughout school life and contribute to restricting later economic and social opportunities.
>
> Deprived-- A child is deprived if, for social, political, or cultural reasons, the "normal" facilities of the school system are available to him only in a restricted form. (p. 16)

When Congress enacted Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, disadvantaged was defined in terms of low income when it declared "it to be the policy of the United States to provide financial assistance...to local educational agencies serving areas with concentrations of children from low-income families to expand and improve their educational programs by various means (including preschool programs) which contribute par-

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ticularly to meeting the special educational needs of educationally deprived children." (Title I, Sec. 101, ESEA of 1965) With the enactment of the Educational Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA) in 1981, Title I was changed to Chapter 1, with local education authorities (LEAs) receiving grants with the amounts determined by the number of low income students within the district. LEAs then select schools within the district with the highest concentrations of children from low-income families who are deemed to be in most need of compensatory education, decide which grades will receive services, what those services will be, who will provide the services and with what materials and resources. Chapter I, as with Title I earlier, results in thousands of different programs, procedures, and services; it is not a single intervention strategy or approach. As noted in the Executive Summary of the National Institute of Education Compensatory Education Study (1978), compensatory education is viewed as:

> one of the Nation's most important efforts to equalize educational opportunity. The concept stems from the recognition that children from disadvantaged backgrounds frequently do not enjoy the same educational benefits as their peers. Many attend schools in districts that have low overall revenues or high concentrations of disadvantaged families....Compensatory education is intended to ease those problems by providing disadvantaged children with additional services to help them complete their education on more equal terms. (p. 1)

There is general agreement that school districts with large concentrations of children and youth from disadvantaged backgrounds have substantially lower academic achievement levels, higher dropout rates, lower college-going rates, higher representation in special education, poorer attendance rates--the data are hard to argue with. There is no consensus on the causes for these differentials in educational performance; there are several theories or hypotheses which are the bases on which compensatory education programs and

efforts are built.

Even the notion of compensatory education has no single definition nor is it a single program or set of practices. As Carter (1984) observed: "There is no simple explanation or description of compensatory education (CE); it is an amalgam of many different programs, practices, and services." (p. 5) "Compensation" implies a deficit which must be overcome: where is the deficiency located--in the child, his family or home, his school, or a combination of all? Is compensatory education a remedial function or a developmental function or a combination of both?

Although educationally disadvantaged students have been in schools for a very long time, it has only been since the 1960's that a variety of federal and state legislation has been enacted and school districts have initiated programs and services to reverse the patterns of poor educational performance and limited life chances that accompany low achievement. These compensatory education efforts have met with varied successes and failures. The more than 30,000 Title I projects across the nation, for example, reflected multiple goals and multiple treatments which are not easily converted into overarching objectives or successful program models. Compensatory education can be characterized or catalogued in a variety of ways, such as:

1. By target population (preschool, elementary, higher education, adults, teachers, etc.)
2. By nature of treatment (therapeutic, compensatory, remedial, enrichment, etc.)
3. By locus of activities (in school, family, community, industry, non-school agency, etc.)
4. By nature of services (instructional, counseling, community development, health, etc.)

5. By basic intent of strategy (reform of system, redistribution of power, integration/desegregation, reallocation of resources, etc.)

6. By focus of diagnosis and prescriptive activities (learners, professionals, the educational system, society, etc.)

7. By source of funding or legislation (Office of Education, Office of Economic Opportunity, state, non-governmental agency, foundation, etc. (Passow, 1971, p. 18)

These catalog sets are not mutually exclusive, of course, and most programs and projects fit into more than one set. Some efforts are very limited and restricted (e.g., a Head Start class for 15 four-year olds), while others are more global and comprehensive (e.g., a magnet school). Most school programs are additive--i.e., tagged on to existing programs rather than designed to provide fundamental changes. Some programs deal with personnel changes, some with organizational changes, some with curriculum and teaching strategies, etc..

An analysis of the various instructional and supporting services provided the almost 5 million pupils in Chapter I programs in 1983-84 showed the following distributions: (a) instructional-- reading (75%), mathematics (46%), language arts (22%), other instructional areas (9%), limited English (12%), and vocational (1%); (b) supporting-- health and nutrition (15%), attendance and guidance (17%), other supporting (7%), and transportation (5%). Since students could receive services in more than one area, the percents total more than 100.

It is this diversity in programs and services, in the ways and means that the programs and services are delivered, in the goals and objectives, in the populations, in the levels of funding, and in other dimensions which make studies of the effectiveness of compensatory education difficult to

make generalizations from. In fact, different conclusions are sometimes reached from the same reviews of studies. The studies of the lasting effects of pre-school and early childhood education is an example of different conclusions reached by different researchers.

A review of a number of Title I evaluation studies completed in the early 1970's identified eight "common characteristics of successful compensatory education programs:"

1. Systematic planning which begins with formal policy decisions to increase support for quality comepnsatory programs.

2. Clear objectives which must be clearly written and stated in specific measurable terms.

3. Intensity of treatment which includes the amount of time the child spends in the program and the staff/pupil ratio within the classroom. [The range in the number of instructional hours per week spread from three-fourths of an hour per day twice weekly to seven hours per day, five days a week. The staff/pupil ratio varied from 1:1 to 1:15.]

4. Attention to individual needs which include a careful diagnosis and an individual plan for each student.

5. Flexibility in grouping which allows staff opportunities to provide small group instruction and to teach frequently on a one-to-one basis.

6. Personnel management which allows key stagg personnel to work individually with teachers in the classroom.

7. Structured program approach which stresses sequential order and activities. Pupils must also receive frequent and immediate feedback.

8. Parental involvement which means the home must support what the child learns in school. (Wargo, 1972)

Mullin and Summers (1983) examined 47 studies conducted between 1969-1980 (most in the late 1960's and early 1970's) on the overall effectiveness of compensatory education. Their major conclusions were as follows:

- The programs have a positive, though small, effect on the achievement of disadvantaged students.

- The results of most studies are overstated because of the upward biases inherent in several standard staistical procedures.
- The gains appear to be greater in earlier years, and the evidence is fairly strong that early gains are not sustained.
- No significant association exists between dollars spent and achievement gains.
- No approach or program characteristic was consistently found to be effective. (p. 339)

Mullin and Summers point out that "It is not possible, however, to total the results of many different studies in any rigorous way." (p. 339) They also note that: "The evaluation literature is so vast and its results so varied that virtually any hypothesis can be supported by a number of studies." (p. 339. Emphasis added.) Their conclusion is: "We know what doesn't work, but we don't know what will work...." (p. 342) Nevertheless, they suggest that there are strong arguments for three policies:

- Spend compensatory education funds on greater number of low-achievers, rather than spend more money on the same number of students. Since participation seems to be advantageous, but more dollars seems not to be, greater achievement gains might come about by redistributing money from the costlier programs to more students.
- Rearrange specific inputs, rather than add new ones. Studies have found some practices particularly effective; others are likely to be particularly ineffective. The appropriate policy response is not just to add to the effective ones but also to substract from the ineffective ones.
- Allow a range of compensatory education programs to exist.... Since the evidence suggests that no one program will work across the country and for all years of schooling, it is likely that only programs developed for specific categories of children with specific socioeconomic backgrounds are likely to be effective. (p.342)

It is possible to suggest other policies on the basis of the Mullin and Summers analysis. For example, they observed that several studies reported "that, even if costlier inputs were more effective, they might not be cost-

effective. A single study...found that they were." (p. 342) Is an input being "more effective" more important than its being "cost effective?" Was the "single study" better or worse than the "several studies?" These and similar questions complicate policy decisions from such a complex body of research.

Carter (1984) also illustrates the complexities of compensatory education research findings in a report on the Sustaining Effects Study, a longitudinal study concerned with the compensatory education as funded under Title I of ESEA. The study included five components:

1. The Longitudinal Study in which student growth in reading, math, functional literacy and attitudes toward school were assessed over a three-year period and this growth related to the kinds and amount of instruction.
2. The Successful Practices in High-Poverty Schools Study in which instructional practices and contexts that seemed effective in raising the reading and math achievement of disadvantaged students were identified.
3. The Participation Study which aimed at determining the relationships between the level of student achievement and services and the economic level of and academic support in the family.
4. The Cost/Effectiveness Study in which aimed at relating educational effectiveness to program cost.
5. The Summer Study in which the effect of attending summer school was studied. (pp. 4-5)

Carter's summary of the highlights of 20 separate reports issued by the Sustaining Effects Study again illustrates the complexity of attempting to

provide definite answers to questions about the overall effectiveness and sustaining effects of compensatory education. Carter begins by pointing out that Title I was a massive funding program, not a "unified or coherent treatment program." The Title I students received a variety of diverse services with an emphasis on small group instruction in a pull-out setting, with the nature and content of the services determined by individual school districts or even individual schools. Again, it is possible to choose selectively from the Sustaining Effects Study report to highlight what Walberg (1984) calls "very damaging evidence on the effectiveness of Title I" (p. 14) or to identify aspects or elements of Title I programs that did result in achievement growth of disadvantaged students. Carter's own conclusion was as follows:

> As the model of the educational process showed, there is a complex interaction between the curriculum, the characteristics of teachers and administrators, the social and economic characterostics of the school, and the background of students. This leads to the unfortunate situation that in attempting to improve performance of disadvantaged students, one must improve a large number of educationally relevant factors and there is no simple solution to the problem of improving the education of disadvantaged students. (p. 12. Emphasis added.)

There is, as Carter, concludes, no simple solution to providing adequately for disadvantaged students. Sometimes, we judge programs as "ineffective" because we do not close the gap between disadvantaged and advantaged students' educational performance. When the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reported that "Students with poor academic track records made some big gains in reading--and held their own in mathematics and science--over the course of the seventies," the panel of experts attributed these gains to compensatory education programs such as the Right-to-Read effort and Title I of ESEA which had flourished in the 1970's. (NAEP Newsletter, 1983, pp. 1 and 2) While the gap may not necessarily have

closed, the NAEP thinks that compensatory efforts may have contributed to improvement of achievement in reading for 9-year olds exposed to such programs.

We now have two decades of experience with compensatory education and while there are no single, simple solutions, some learnings and policy directions seem relatively clear. It is easy to state that compensatory education programs are not cost-effective, it is just as easy to justify increased expenditures for certain aspects or components of compensatory education. Among these are the following:

1. Early childhood programs. The reports on long term gains from early intervention (Brown, 1978; Lazar et al., 1979; Schweinhart and Weikart, 1980) provide a strong case on the importance of providing educational programs (in contrast to child-care). A number of early childhood programs have been developed--including curriculum, materials, teacher training--which have proven their value.

The Sustaining Effects Study (Carter, 1984) found no one grade in which compensatory education was most effective but it appears to be more effective in the earlier grades than in the upper grades. This does not mean that there is a point at which poor academic achievement is no longer reversible. (See. for example, Feuerstein, 1980.)

2. Staff development and in-service education. The Sustaining Effects Study, for example, found that "Teachers of Title I students reported using different methods and practices in teaching Title I students than did teachers of regular students." (Carter, 1984, p. 5) Despite more than 20 years of concern with educating disadvantaged learners, teacher education programs still do not deal adequately with curriculum and instruction appropriate to

these learners. Even were more done in pre-service education, staff development which focuses on extending knowledge, skills and insights into the nature of disadvantaged learners and on curriculum, teaching strategies, and instructional materials which have "worked" with these youngsters is necessary on a continuing basis. Appropriate staff development is not a one-shot affair. Moreover, "teacher burnout" studies suggest that stress is greater in schools where educational achievement is lower and that schools with large concentrations of disadvantaged pupils have more stressful environments. Staff development activities which focus on counseling and support can help alleviate teacher burnout. Staff development programs require additional funds. (Farber, 1983; Truch, 1982)

3. Pull-out vis-a-vis regular class instruction. The Sustaining Effects Study found:

> The typical mode of special CE instruction was a pullout setting. The pullout setting seems to offer a positive learning environment; when compared to regular instructional settings, pullout was associated with smaller instructional groups, higher staff-to-student ratios, more student on-task behavior, less teacher time in behavioral management, more harmonious classroom atmosphere, fewer negative comments by teachers, and a higher quality of cognitive monitoring, on-task monitoring, and organization of activities. (Carter, 1984, p. 5)

Ensuring that disadvantaged learners spend more time on educational tasks requires substantial interaction with the teacher, including "one-to=one instruction" or its equivalent. Obviously, one-to-one tutoring is impossible on a large scale and it is not possible to reduce regular class size to a student ratio of, say, one-to-five where research indicates that class size makes a difference, the pullout setting makes small group instruction possible. Teachers need in-service education which will help them function effectively in those settings.

However, in reporting another finding from the Sustaining Effects Study, a major problem is posed. Carter (1984) reported that:

> Title I students received considerably more hours of instruction in reading and math than did regular students. But while Titlte I students received this additional reading and math instruction, regular students were also receiving instruction in various subjects, including other language arts activities, other math, social studies, science, field trips, and physical education. Thus it is not clear that Title I students enjoyed a net gain in total instruction. (p.5)

Other studies suggest that Title I students did not, in fact, have a net gain in total instruction and often missed substantial amounts of instruction in other areas by being pulled out for compensatory instruction. The solution to this problem may be to schedule the additional math and reading instruction at times when they do not preclude class time in other important subjects or to provide for an extended school day for disadvantaged learners. An extended school day would, of course, require additional funding The advantages and disadvantages of alternative solutions to this problem need to be weighed.

4. Appropriate instructional materials and resources. Levin has pointed out:

> Although some interventions will require little additional expenditure, such as the use of more appropriate curricula or more flexible school policies, others will need modest increases and yet others, major investments. For example, major achievement gains can be made for as little as $ 120 a year per subject for each student and mathematics and reading through computer-assisted instruction. Even larger gains are possible through good peer tutoring programs that cost somewhat over $ 200 a year per student. (Levin, 1985, p. 19)

Yet, in the case of computer technology, Gordon and Armour-Thomas (1985) have found significant differences in terms of access to computers and the kinds of learning that takes place with them. For example, 66 percent of public schools in affluent districts have access to computers

compared with 41 percent in poorer districts. (p.30) They report another study (Anderson, Welch and Harris, 1983) which claimed "that the wealthiest schools are four times as likely to have microcomputers as are the poor schools." (p. 31) In addition to issues concerning access to computers, Gordon and Armour-Thomas argue that there are:

> differentials in the quality of programs and the usages of the equipment. The more creative and challenging functions, such as simulation, for which the computer can be used and may be more effective at providing are much more likely to be available to students in affluent situations than to students from situations marked by resource limitations....Measured against educational need and the potnetial of this new technology, the advent of the computer in education under conditions reflected in current trends may exacerbate the problems of educational equity, not because of the technology but because of lack of human commitment to educational need. (p. 37)

The issues concerning the usage and availability of microcomputers are indicative of the general set of issues concerning resource availability in schools with disadvantaged learners.

5. Provisions for Children with Limited English. Minorities enrollments in public schools have risen sharply in recent years. Waggoner (1984) notes that, according to the 1980 census, approximately 17 percent of children ages 5-17 were living in households in which a language other than English was spoken. Levin (1985) observes that students who have "parents with little education, low income and language other than English at home are multiply disadvantaged from an educational perspective." (p. 7) In 1978, an estimated 2.4 million children between ages 5-14 had limited English proficiency." (Ascher, 1982, p. 1) While there is controversy about the nature of, the value of, and the long-term effects of bilingual education, clearly schools must provide appropriate instruction for students with limited English and this takes additional resources for staff, curriculum

and materials. (Harrington, 1980)

6. Programs for Disadvantaged High School Students. The bulk of compensatory education efforts is focused on the elementary and early childhood years. Yet, there is evidence that poor academic performance is reversible in the junior high and senior high school years. (Smilansky and Nevo, 1979). At the secondary school level, a variety of special programs are needed including remedial, dropout prevention, vocational education, work experience, college-preparation. These require staff and curriculum development, guidance and support services, community-based experiential education opportunities and a variety of targeted efforts to provide for the "high risk" secondary school students." (Blum and Spangehl, 1982) Schools with large numbers of disadvantaged youngsters need faculty skilled in developing and using curricula aimed at providing learning-how-tolearn and meta-cognition skills as well as teaching such students what Boocock (1972) calls the "student role," the attitudes and behaviors required to succeed in school. Since higher education is not a tradition in the families of most disadvantaged youngsters, they need to be involved in programs which will develop the attitudes, motivation, and skills needed to enter and succeed in college. Upward Bound-type programs, tutoring, "college prep" classes have all proved their value in increasing the college-going rate of minorities and disadvantaged students.

7. Programs for the Disadvantaged Gifted. Since the Marland Report (1971) to Congress on the status of education of the gifted, there has been a renaissance in concern and planning for gifted and talented students. This sharp increase in planning and programming for gifted

students has highlighted the need for special attention to identifying and nurturing what has come to be called the "disadvantaged gifted," the gifted and talented from minorities and poverty groups. The gifted child is usually defined as a child with potential for outstanding achievement who requires a program and services different from what is regularly available. Disadvantaged gifted children represent the largest reservoir of untapped talent in our society because of the problems which exist in identifying and nurturing them. Tests and procedures normally used to identify gifted children often miss disadvantaged gifted. Scholastic underachievement of disadvantaged children may mask their real potential. Because the teachers, the family, and the child's peers may not appreciate or promote the particular talents of disadvantaged children, these gifts may go unidentified and undeveloped. Children from more advantaged families and neighborhoods may have opportunities to develop their talents in community agencies and their families as well as through school-based programs. Without special efforts and programming by the school, many disadvantaged gifted will go unidentified and will not develop their potential fully, at a loss to themselves and to society generally. (Passow, 1986)

8. Parent Participation Programs. Since the 1960's, there have been efforts to increase parent participation in the education of their children, especially by low income minority parents. Armor and others (1976) found that school efforts to reach out to involve parents in the education of their children were associated with enhanced reading achievement of low income students in a Los Angeles study. Epstein (1984) studied the effects on reading and mathematics scores of teachers

involving parents in home-learning activities. According to Epstein: "two types of parents influence positive growth in reading achievement--parents who are expected to help their children (those with more education) and parents who are helped to help their children (those whose children's teachers involve them in learning activities and increase their knowledge about the school program)." (p. 7) Becker and Epstein (1982) have written suggesting various techniques for increasing parent participation in their children's learning in school. Lombard (1981) has reported on the success of the Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) in which thousands of low income mothers were involved in teaching their children pre-reading and related skills, most of the mothers having overcome their own functional illiteracy in the process of working with their children.

9. Recruiting and Retaining Teachers. Their are many studies which describe the problems of recruiting and retaining good teachers in schools with disadvantaged children. The findings point to the least experienced teachers being assigned to such schools, to the short tenure of such teachers, of classes being exposed to a continuous turnover of teachers, and other horror stories. On the other hand, there are many teachers who are skilled, dedicated, effective in such schools but many teachers find schools with large concentrations of disadvantaged children stressful and frustrating. Teachers derive their rewards from the performance of their students, in part. Decent salaries are essential but decent working conditions are as important. When teacher turnover is high, this has an adverse effect on the students which in turn creates a climate

which is not conducive to successful teaching and learning. Smaller classes help but are obviously expensive. It is the pervasive climate of the school in the community which determines whether the school is perceived by its students, its teachers, and its parents as a healthy, nurturing place or a custodial institution and whether teachers will derive the satisfactions which they seek from the profession.

In sum. Additional resources are needed for a variety of services and programs which are essential if schools with concentrations of disadvantaged children and youth are to function effectively. Additional resources are needed to ensure orderly classrooms and schools in which children can learn and teachers can teach. Additional resources are needed to provide enrichment experiences which families and communities normally provide for more advantaged students.

Some educators argue that more resources have not resulted in closing the gap between educationally-deprived low income and minority students and their more advantaged peers. Other educators--and I am among them--argue that twenty-plus years of compensatory education have taught us what works and the conditions under which particular programs and practices work. Closing the achievement gap between the disadvantaged and the advantaged is an appropriate long-range goal but the more immediate task is to raise the achievement of the disadvantaged children and youth so that they will be able to enter society's mainstream and so that the idea of equality of opportunity will become a reality and not simply a slogan.

Compensatory education efforts have not solved the problem of low educational performance of low-income and minority disadvantaged students completely because society has not solved its problems with the result that

each year there is a new cadre of disadvantaged children entering our schools from parents and families still beset with problems of housing, employment, safety, health, and recreation. Education can contribute to reversing this spiral by enhancing the academic performance of the children and youth but schools need the resources to design and implement appropriate programs and services to do so.

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